

Title I Program Evaluation (School Year 2012-2013)

September 2013

INTRODUCTION

In the prestigious tradition of Howard University, the Howard University Middle School of Mathematics and Science (MS)², provides an educational experience of exceptional quality for a diverse middle school student population with high academic potential. As a Washington, DC public charter school located directly on the main campus of Howard University, (MS)² opens its doors to students regardless of their past academic performance, social-economic condition, and learning style. Through an educational model that is student-centered and inquiry-based, (MS)² creates an environment that is engaging, nurturing, fun, and safe for the academic risk-taking needed to master rigorous scholarly disciplines.

The primary principle underpinning the Middle School's foundation is the belief that all students should have a truly equal opportunity, not just to any education, but to a top-flight education, regardless of the factors that have shaped their lives. As such, (MS)²'s program is designed so that every advantage or improvement that is known to be essential to the learning process is made available to all enrolled students. Despite the fact that students are not required to demonstrate past academic success, or a particular degree of scholarly aptitude to gain admission, the academic program is rigorous, and designed to prepare middle school students for the highest levels of success in high school, college, and their varied professional pursuits. With this design comes the understanding that with the proper support, resources and nurturing environment, all students can shine.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Each year in crafting our Title I plan for the school year, the school begins with looking through the data of our annual Needs Assessment (as reflected in our Consolidated Application, LEA Plan, and School Title I Plan). The primary components of the Needs Assessment are reviewing the results of from our two major assessment tools: the NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Associates) and DC CAS. Again, as documented within our Title I and LEA Plan, once again those results reflect that a majority of our students entered our program in August of 2012 performing below grade level in the two core subjects of Mathematics and Reading. In addition to reviewing the student level assessment data, the other critical components of the Needs Assessment is reviewing the results of the student, parent, and faculty meetings.

INITIATIVES/OUTCOMES

As the results of our needs assessment demonstrate that a growing percentage of our students continue to arrive at our school in the 6th grade significantly under-resourced, the committee decided to focus the totality of the funding to improve 6th grade scores for both math and reading. This was the case because over the entire eight year history of the school, we have been able to demonstrate that every year, as a cohort, students' performance grows from year to year as they move through the program. However, the problem has been that by receiving incoming 6th graders performing lower as a whole, than the cohort before them, the overall school scores are negatively impacted.

Therefore, the two actions that were taken were the support of two supplemental core content teachers (one mathematics teacher, and one Reading Response to Intervention teacher - RTI), in efforts to make significant testing strides in our students first year of middle school. Both teaching positions supported by this funding were supplemental to the Middle School's core program, and their work was targeted to the 6th grade student population primarily.

While the school as a whole, did not make its overall Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs), it should be noted that the school came within just 1.2 percentage points of reaching the Reward School Status. Specifically, as it relates to the areas where Title I funding was directed to, 6th grade math and reading, significant growth was shown with both yearend DC CAS and NWEA results. This is evidenced by this year's 6th grade math scores being 81 percent, and reading 64 percent. With the NWEA scores, they have grown by 2.2 grade level equivalents for math and 1.7 for reading.

LESSONS LEARNED/CHANGES TO PROGRAM

In reviewing this data, the primary lesson learned was that much of the data that was used as the foundation for the intervention strategies, was received late in the school year. Primarily, since the initiative focused on the working with 6th grade performance with reading and math, as a middle school that starts in the 6th grade, the DC CAS baseline data was not received until December 2012. Thus, for the upcoming 2013-2014 school year, this data will be requested from OSSE at the beginning of the school year, and made available to the team in September for the improvement of the plan.